

## *Grand Canyon National Park Colorado River Management and Planning*

CRMP NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 1989

N1623(GRCA)

Dear Friends of the Grand Canyon:

The Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP) is finalized and has been posted in the Federal Register for 30 days. A copy of the Finding of No Significant Impact signed by the Regional Director and the Synopsis of Public Comment to the draft CRMP are enclosed.

Grand Canyon National Park has determined that the cost of mailing the final plan is prohibitive. The mailing cost of the draft CRMP was \$4,000. The National Technical Information Service will print and distribute the final plan for approximately 15 dollars and should be available December 15. The address is:

United States Department of Commerce  
National Technical Information Service  
5285 Port Royal Road  
Springfield, Virginia 22161

The Colorado River Management Plan is available for review at Grand Canyon National Park. Copies of the plan are also located in the main branch of public libraries in Flagstaff, Phoenix, Tucson, Salt Lake City, Cedar City, Denver, Reno, San Francisco, and Sacramento.

The Colorado River Management Plan will be responsive, on an annual basis, to results of research, monitoring programs, and public and constituent group input. Interested persons are encouraged to submit comments to the Superintendent for consideration at any time for use in the annual review.

The Glen Canyon Environmental Studies (GCES) began in December 1982 to determine the impact of operations of the Glen Canyon Dam on the downstream ecological and environmental resources within the Grand Canyon National Park and the Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. In 1988, the first GCES report indicated that the operation of Glen Canyon Dam has substantial adverse effects on downstream environmental and recreational resources. However, due to the fact that the studies were conducted during years of record high runoff of the Colorado River, it was determined that additional studies concerning the impact of low and fluctuating flows were needed. These studies will now be encompassed in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement requested on July 27, 1989 by Secretary of the Interior, Manuel Lujan. Grand Canyon National Park will incorporate results of these studies in the future management of the Colorado River.





5. LOWER GORGE MANAGEMENT:

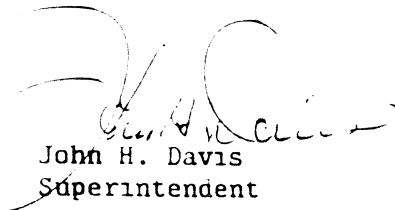
Interim guidelines have been designed to regulate use coming upriver from Lake Mead during development of a comprehensive Colorado River Lower Gorge Management Plan.

6. RIVER TRIPS CONDUCTED FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES:

A method was defined for application of river trips conducted for research purposes.

Grand Canyon National Park thanks all who contributed in the review of the Colorado River Management Plan.

Sincerely,



John H. Davis  
Superintendent



FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
FOR  
1989 REVISION - COLORADO RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN  
GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK, ARIZONA  
JULY, 1989

NATURE OF THE PROPOSAL AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

In 1987, Grand Canyon National Park began review of the Colorado River Management Plan (CRMP), through a public process that resulted in development of a draft (revised) plan and environmental assessment. The environmental assessment evaluated only two alternatives: continued management under the 1981 plan; and, the initiation of management under the revised plan (the preferred alternative).

In evaluating the proposal, the environmental assessment considered the effects of changes proposed by the revised plan, comparing its impacts to those of the 1981 plan. The 1981 plan assumed that the 1979 CRMP Environmental Impact Statement was still valid and combined provisions of several of the alternatives evaluated in the 1979 EIS; thus, the environmental assessment for the revised (1989) plan tiered off the 1979 EIS. In assessing cumulative impacts, the environmental assessment for the current proposal concludes that the revised plan consists of operational refinements and does not appear to establish actions and incremental impacts adversely affecting natural and cultural resources beyond those levels resulting under the 1981 plan.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC REVIEW:

In March of 1987, CRMP review was initiated with the mailing of 4000 notifications to individuals, media, interest groups, congressional delegations and cooperating agencies; over 1000 planning guides were requested by those interested in contributing to the identification of major issues. In July of 1987, the park began revision of the Colorado River Management Plan with a workshop to discuss Colorado River management issues with researchers, concessioners and public constituents. In March 1988, an issue workbook was mailed to approximately 400 individuals, agencies and institutions for their review and input (over 50 were returned); public meetings were held in Flagstaff, AZ, Denver, CO, and Reno, NV, during April and May (with approximately eighty-four individuals attending). Following evaluation of comments, Draft Preferred Alternatives were developed and presented in meetings held in mid-July with the Grand Canyon Concessioner's Steering Committee and the Constituent Advisory Committee (made up of natural and social science researchers, noncommercial user groups, commercial river guides and environmental organizations). In August, the Preferred Alternatives were mailed out, with comments received from the public for a 30 day period. On November 10, 1988, a Draft Colorado River Management Plan/Environmental Assessment was distributed to over 500 individuals, agencies and institutions; the 30-day review period was announced in the Federal Register in November, 1988. On December 20, 1988, the public review period was extended an additional thirty days, for those needing additional time to formulate comments. One hundred and thirty written responses were received during the entire public review period, twenty four of which were received during the extension period. A summary of public comments was prepared. Both a draft of this FINDING and the summary of public comments were made available for a 30-day public review period, as announced in the Federal Register, dated July 24, 1989, on page 30800. Twelve copies of the FINDING were requested and distributed; no comments were received.

SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES:

The plan provides for improved management and monitoring through its adoptance of limits of acceptable change and a defined research and monitoring program; seasonal contact/crowding levels are specified, and acceptable influence of recreational use on natural and cultural resources, trail development and water quality are defined.

The National Park Service conducted an informal section 7 consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The primary impacts on listed species, in particular: the humpback chub, bald eagle and peregrine falcon are, more likely than not, due to the direct result of the operations of Glen Canyon Dam. Any changes in visitor use due to the implementation of the Revised CRMP would be minor and incremental to existing impacts. To the best of our knowledge, past river use by visitors has had no discernible impact on these species. This is not to say, categorically, that impacts do not exist.

The CRMP is a dynamic document. The intent of the National Park Service is to revise the CRMP, especially with respect to the aforementioned species, as soon as the current research associated with



## IMPACT / MITIGATION MATRIX

PARK: Grand Canyon National Park

PROJECT: 1989 Colorado River Management Plan Revision

IMPACT	PRESCRIBED MITIGATION AND RESPONSIBILITY
<p>1. Counting of Commercial deadhead trips, traveling downriver with empty boats to Phantom Ranch, against the launch limit for the day of launch is intended to reduce congestion and crowding downriver, as resulted under the 1981 plan where deadheads could launch along with a full schedule of 166 persons launching. Though unlikely, this action could actually result in increased crowding, or it may be possible that additional crowding could be mitigated through an alternative launch scenario.</p>	<p>1. Monitoring will be necessary to determine if the action accomplishes its desired objective, of reducing contacts and crowding downstream of Phantom Ranch. The objective of the monitoring will be to assess the launch days of those groups with which the deadhead trips make contacts, following its taking on passengers at Phantom Ranch. Other monitoring programs should indicate normal contact/crowding levels in the absence of deadheading trips. Comparison of the two may indicate need to refine the deadhead scheduling procedure. Responsibility: Resources Management.</p>
<p>2. Supplemental launches intended to provide private users equitable access to the user-day allocation may result in sociological impacts to the groups that double-launch together; these groups may compete for campsites or spend periods of time in sight of each other that are unacceptable to one or both of the groups.</p>	<p>2. Monitoring will be necessary to assess whether sociological impacts will occur for those groups double launching together. Assessing such impact will require sociological science methodology, which must be undertaken through sociologists; this work cannot be undertaken earlier than FY-90. Funding has been requested. Possible mitigations, if indicated by monitoring, may include: allowing double launches, but with groups with different itineraries only; double launches on high launch days, so that downstream contacts are with faster boats that launched on low density launch dates; and reduction of launches from both the commercial and noncommercial sectors. Responsibility: Resources Management.</p>
<p>3. Defined management objectives, in the form of Limits of Acceptable Change are included in the plan.</p>	<p>3. Monitoring programs necessary to support these management objectives are specified in the matrices outlining the Limits of Acceptable Change. If impacts/influence/change occurs, as indicated by monitoring, above those levels specified as acceptable, the prescribed means of assuring accomplishment will be implemented; some actions may best be accomplished following an action specific environmental assessment, in order to assure adequate public involvement in</p>



Summary of Public Comment  
November 10, 1988 to January 20, 1989

November 1988 Draft Colorado River Management Plan  
Grand Canyon National Park

The public review period for the Draft Colorado River Management Plan was initially November 10, 1988 to December 9, 1988. On December 20, 1988 the review period was extended to January 20, 1989. During the initial and extended review periods 131 letters were received, containing over 600 comments. People commented on all aspects of the plan and its appendices, and addressed editing, overall content, the planning process, and the environmental review process, as well as specific issues and changes from the previous plan.

For evaluation of comments, letters were grouped into four categories: outfitters; professional river guides; researchers, organizations, and individuals having close involvement with the park; and the general public. All four groups commented on a wide range of issues, but certain issues were more important to some groups than others.

The General Public (55 letters, 222 comments) commented on all aspects of the plan, with many comments on several of the proposed changes to management policies that affect non-commercial users: administrative charges, continuing interest and participant rules, and the deferral policy. Many also commented on the allocation between commercial and non-commercial sectors.

Outfitters (30 letters, 98 comments) had a primary interest in the allocation of user days for commercial secondary season use.

Professional River Guides (24 letters, 143 comments) commented on a wide range of issues, and were particularly concerned with the issue of overcrowding in the river corridor.

Researchers and Organizations (22 letters, 177 comments) addressed many issues, in particular overall plan content and internal consistency, resources monitoring, the environmental review process, and proposed new guidelines for research trips in the Colorado River corridor.

In the following summary, comments have been grouped according to the table of contents of the plan. General comments on the plan as a whole are presented first.



of sound Colorado River management policies, and an in depth monitoring program.

10 people encouraged the NPS to take a stronger stance on BOR operational procedures for Glen Canyon Dam, and to make commitments to attempt to reduce deleterious effects.

**Response:** References to the NPS responsibility relative to its relationship to BOR and review of Glen Canyon Dam operations were strengthened. Some monitoring programs outlined in the Limits of Acceptable Change appendix adopt GCES study methodologies.

### 3. Commercial/noncommercial allocation: 17 comments

Most of these commenters expressed disappointment that the issue of "equity or allocation/access between commercial and noncommercial users" was not addressed in the plan.

One person supported retaining 115,500 user days in the commercial sector.

**Response:** A total of 38 supplemental launches per primary season were added to the schedule as a means of improving noncommercial access to the noncommercial allocation; the NPS chose this alternative over attempting a reallocation by providing a method which allows for an increase in utilization of the noncommercial allocation.

### 4. Fishing trips: 4 comments

3 people supported the park's decision not to allow commercial fishing trips in the canyon.

1 person stated that the park should develop a policy to allow these trips.

**Response:** Public response generated in public meetings prior to the draft CRMP indicated a general lack of support for development of a specialized user group.

### 5. Wilderness: 4 comments

4 people said that the wilderness issue needs to be addressed in the plan.

**Response:** Wilderness proposals for Grand Canyon National Park have been made as part of the public land's inventory.

### 6. Resource issues: 7 comments

Comments included assessments that the plan was a rating plan and did not adequately address management of the resource, or address other uses of the river corridor such as use of beaches by backpackers and fishermen.

5 people considered fishermen's camps in Marble Canyon to be a major problem with significant impacts on the environment.

**Response:** The scope of this plan has been identified in the introduction to the final plan.

### 7. Other: 9 comments

Included comments that the plan should also address: helicopter use at Whitmore Wash, motorized use of the river, and emergency operations for situations involving hazardous materials.

**Response:** The influence of Public Law 100-91, and its provision of a helicopter corridor for takeouts at Whitmore, is discussed in the Limits of Acceptable Change appendix; the Whitmore Wash Trail will be maintained for possible mule and hiker takeouts. The motors issue was not evaluated.

Hazardous materials contingencies will be covered in a park hazardous wastes plan.

### e. Miscellaneous: 14 comments



1 person felt that if fees were imposed, all users, commercial and noncommercial should be charged, with the money to be used directly to fund research, monitoring, and rehabilitation in the river corridor.

**Response:** Fee schedules were changed to \$25 to get on the waiting list and \$50 launch fee. Authority to charge fees cited--36 CFR 71.10. Sec. 1-6, Special Recreation Permits and Special Recreation Permit Fees, to be used directly for river management purposes. Commercial companies are required to pay a franchise fee (approximately 2-1/4% of gross annual revenues).

**d. Scheduling of Noncommercial Launch Dates: 12 comments**

6 people opposed 2 year advanced scheduling.

2 people supported 2 year advanced scheduling.

Other commenters suggested that people should be given the option of one or two year advance scheduling, and that this policy should be instituted on an experimental basis only.

**Response:** 2-year scheduling was adopted to eliminate a trip deferral rate of nearly 50%; the noncommercial operating requirements will be reviewed on a yearly basis and this can be changed should it prove not to be successful.

**e. Noncommercial Double Launches and Resultant Effects on Commercial Launch Calendars: 33 comments**

15 support double launches as a means of improving access to the noncommercial user day allocation.

7 commenters felt that double launches should be a temporary policy until impacts are monitored and evaluated, since the effects of double launches may be in conflict with the management objectives of the plan.

4 people stated that double launches will increase crowding; one alternative proposed was to increase the group size limit for noncommercial trips in order to allow more private boaters on the river without compromising the goals and objectives of the CRMP.

10 people opposed double launches; some felt that double launches could be tolerated in the secondary use season.

2 commenters opposed the reduction of the commercial limit from 150 to 134 on noncommercial double launch days.

**Response:** Double launches will help assure noncommercial access to their allocation and their impacts will be monitored and addressed in the LAC process. Should there be a determination that there are unacceptable contacts and crowding, then reduction of trips could occur for both sectors, as identified in the LAC.

**f. Noncommercial Continuing Interest and Participant Rules: 32 comments.**

17 supported the flexibility of the continuing interest requirement of "one missed deadline"; some commenters asked that the continuing interest requirement be eliminated altogether, and some wished to be able to apply for permits year round.

3 people support retention of the annual continuing interest rule as implemented prior to the revision.

12 support the change to allow people on the waiting list to participate in one other noncommercial trip, some commenting that permit holders should be allowed unlimited opportunity to participate in other private trips.

**Response:** Relaxed continuing interest rules further increases noncommercial access to the Colorado River; the flexibility of the continuing-interest and the trip participant rule were adopted in response to comments received in the 2-year review period.



2 people support the new guidelines.

7 commercial operators support equal allocation of winter use, with equal access to the user day pool.

7 commercial operators support winter allocation based on historic use.

7 felt that the formula used for winter use allocation is based on years not necessarily representative of winter use, and that companies should be notified in advance that certain years will be used to determine historic use allocations.

Other comments suggested eliminating the user day pool in the winter; allowing transfer of unused summer allocation to winter; increasing winter use; and allowing "motor only" companies to run bar trips in the winter so that they would have equal access to the pool.

**Response:** The plan has been changed to the following: "This plan awards all historical users their average allocation from October 1, 1981 through April 30, 1987. If a company failed to average over 300 user days, they were allotted a base allocation of 300 user days. All 20 companies have been given an equal share of the remaining user days." This change allows more equal access to the secondary season user day allotment than in the draft plan.

**k. Noncommercial User Day Pool:** 16 comments

11 support a noncommercial user day pool.

3 oppose a noncommercial user day pool, with the comment that this will increase crowding.

2 suggest combining the commercial and noncommercial user day pools.

**Response:** The Plan includes a noncommercial user day pool, paralleling that of the commercial sector, which will help improve access.

**l. Lower Gorge Management:** comments under Appendix F.

**m. Noncommercial Deferral Policy:** 26 comments.

All comments opposed the elimination of the deferral policy, citing extenuating circumstances such as illness or legitimate scheduling problems as justification for its continued use.

**Response:** Deferrals will not be allowed unless the permittee has a confirmed medical problem that will not allow them to participate in a river trip. Exceptions may be requested in writing addressed to the Chief of Visitor and Resource Protection. Deferrals are the chief obstruction causing unwarranted delays in gaining access to the river.

#### **IV. Appendix A: Resource Monitoring Program:** 44 comments

The monitoring program was viewed by many commenters as an important part of the plan. 11 general comments on the monitoring program voiced concerns over such matters as responsibility for the programs, frequency of monitoring, review of results, ambitiousness of the program, integration of Glen Canyon Environmental Studies results and actual accomplishment.

Other comments addressed refinement of proposed programs, or the addition of new programs, for topics such as: water quality, endangered species, radionuclides, geologic hazards, and fishermen and hiker trash in Marble Canyon.

**Response:** Monitoring programs are an integral part of the CRMP.

#### **V. Appendix B: Levels of Acceptable Change (LAC):** 48 comments

##### **General Comments:**

17 fully support the LAC's; some propose including in the body of the plan.

4 support the LAC or its concept but were concerned either about the level of public involvement used in



**Response:** The environmental assessment prepared for the revision of the Colorado River Management Plan tiered off the environmental impact statement prepared in 1979, which generally assessed the impacts of the same issues present in 1989. As such, the environmental assessment was used to evaluate the impacts of changes in the 1989 plan over that of the 1981 plan; though indeed impacts, many of the issues raised were believed to be the result of other management or of other legislated authority.